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THE HIGH-SCHOOL FACULTY MEETING

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In the Thornton Township High School we have long been impressed with the importance of the high-school faculty meeting as a factor in effective high-school administration. As the result of considerable experimentation a systematic plan of procedure has been evolved which seems to have good results. It is the purpose of this paper to describe in general terms this plan, which is based on specific practice in the school covering a period of years.

Education is a continuous process, and the means of promoting it must necessarily be thoroughly integrated, otherwise there is an enormous waste of efficiency and effort. The same objectives of education should dominate the principal and all the teachers. They cannot so dominate the entire high-school faculty unless these objectives are discussed in the faculty meeting and concrete applications of them to the teaching in every department are thoroughly considered by the teaching body as a whole. The teacher in one department must know in detail how these objectives are attained in other departments, in order to adjust properly the work of his own department. In other words, every teacher must know thoroughly the whole process of education in order to discharge properly his own particular duties in this process. In this way the teacher will very promptly acquire the attitude of teaching students rather than subjects.

Furthermore, the high-school faculty is a social machine for the accomplishment of social results. It cannot operate unless it acquires social solidarity by cooperative study of its

problems. Unity of effort can be secured only through common consideration of common difficulties. There are certain common principles of method underlying the teaching in departments which vary widely in content and aim. A cooperative study of such topics as these will make evident the common problems existing in the various departments and will minimize departmental differences.

In order to attain the full benefit from the use of the faculty meeting to accomplish these results, it is necessary to set up a well-ordered system of attacking these various problems. The system used in Thornton Township High School will be discussed under the following heads: (*a*) administration of school routine; (*b*) constant review of the fundamental principles of secondary education; (*c*) continuous study of new movements in education; (*d*) continuous study of the proposed changes in the evolution of the school; (*e*) consideration of miscellaneous topics; (*f*) effects of this plan on the teaching body; (*g*) necessary qualifications on the part of the principal to operate the plan.

Topics *a* to *e* should be so organized that they are all kept constantly in the current thought of the members of the faculty. One after another they should be the main topics for the consideration of the faculty according to some well-defined plan. Occasionally, according to plan, one of these divisions may absorb attention for a series of meetings, but in that case a small fraction of each session may be given to the other divisions. Great care should be taken that the plan when once adopted is not thrown out of balance. Each of the divisions of the work can be handled successfully in a series of meetings interlocking with similar series covering each of the other divisions.

Failure to give large attention to the administration of school routine results in the wreck of a good many high-school programs. On the other hand, because of its fundamental

importance, many school faculties give it an amount of time which is disproportionate to the real tasks of education. Sometimes the principal secures proper attention to routine on the part of the teachers by constant conferences with them and constant work with the student body; indeed, his energy and his attention are often totally absorbed in this task. In some cases the faculty meeting is given over entirely to the consideration of this topic to the exclusion of all others.

A well-defined plan should govern the proportion of time devoted to this subject. A few meetings at the beginning of each school year should probably be devoted to a thorough exposition of the routine of the school. In these first meetings the faculty members will be made thoroughly conversant with the procedure in the organization of the school in order that they may act intelligently with reference to this matter. The daily schedule should be discussed; the time when teachers are expected to be on hand in the morning; the time when they may leave in the afternoon; the rules of the school with reference to the passing of pupils between periods; such petty details as how pupils shall be permitted to pass from teacher to teacher during their study periods; uniform procedure as to the management of the study-hall, and so forth. In the same manner the teacher should be thoroughly familiarized with the office records and with all the blanks and documents of various kinds used about the building. In fact, the entire routine of the school should be discussed so that the teachers may understand it thoroughly.

In this connection the faculty should be thoroughly indoctrinated with the idea that the utmost adherence to formal matters of school management will be insisted upon. Wherever a large number of people are working together, the machinery works with greater facility if very little opportunity for individuality is left in such matters. The teacher should understand that in these formal matters great uniformity is required in

order that wide liberty may be provided for the individuality of the teacher for the real work of education in the classroom.

In this connection the educational principles involved should be made clear to the teachers. It should be explained clearly to them that certain formal elements about the school can be made to function with greater uniformity if advantage is taken of the tendency of people to form long- and short-time habits. Habits about the school should be created with the expectation that pupils will follow certain methods during their entire school career. Certain other habits should be created with the expectation that they will last only a year or even only a part of a year. The stabilizing power of tradition should be used in this connection. Certain matters of conduct should become a tradition of the school, so that pupils may learn about them informally from each other. Pupils will also begin in the lower grades to learn what those traditions are and will comply with them on the first day of their entrance into the school.

Now, as was stated above, too much time must not be given to the creation of these formal school habits. With a new principal and a new faculty, a good many meetings might be necessary; but if principal and teachers have had considerable experience in working together, the number of meetings at the beginning of each year devoted to school routine can be reduced to a minimum. Routine matters should be explained sufficiently to enable old teachers to call them freshly to mind and thoroughly to acquaint new teachers with them. At later times during the year matters of school organization and routine can be left to go forward of their own momentum for long stretches of time. Occasionally circumstances may demand that an entire period be again devoted to this topic. Usually it can be disposed of when necessary in the first five or ten minutes of any regular faculty meeting. If the faculty thoroughly studies these matters of organization and routine as applied to the local school and faithfully executes the principles laid down, it will

have large opportunity during the school year for considering other important educational topics, to a discussion of which this paper now turns.

As soon as the school is established as a going concern, the faculty at its weekly meetings should devote many of its sessions to a study of the fundamental principles of secondary education. These principles, of course, take into view to some extent the principles of elementary education on the one hand and of collegiate education on the other. As soon as this is undertaken the principal and faculty should face the fact that they are in the presence of certain permanent principles, which, if considered in a merely formal way, will produce only indifferent results. If, furthermore, the constant study of these principles is neglected, the teaching becomes formal, the principles are forgotten, or at least lie dormant in the minds of the teachers, and the work of the school becomes largely ineffective.

In this division of the work a systematic plan of procedure covering the field should be outlined. A list may be made of those principles which it seems advisable to study during the year; for example, general objectives of secondary education; permanency of learning as applied to daily tests and a system of reviews; individual differences among students; drill; problem-solving, and the like. It is desirable that some of the chief principles be touched upon at least once each year. Best results seem to be attained by taking up a topic such as "problem-solving" for a meeting or a series of meetings. After a fundamental principle has been studied intensively it need not be considered again for a considerable time. However, such a principle as "problem-solving" should periodically come up for a brief review and new applications. After a period of two or three years, when perhaps the high-school faculty has changed its constituency somewhat, the topic

should again be treated exhaustively, but from a fresh point of view and in a new manner.

In the making of an intensive study of one of these topics, experience shows that it is advisable in the first place to review some of the literature on the topic; then to devote a major part of the time to a concrete study of the topic as it is applied in the various departments. As time allows, each department should make its particular contribution to this topic. At the same time each department should generalize its experience and show how the same principle is applicable in the other departments. In this way the faculty comes to have a more perfect idea of the unity of all educational effort in the institution.

In this connection it may be said that teachers should be encouraged to take a broad view of their responsibilities. They should be encouraged to read throughout the year one or two books and one or two magazines on the work of their particular departments. In addition to this they should read one or two magazines and one or more books on the more general topics of education. It should be made clear that a departmental teacher, who is entirely absorbed in the technique of his own department and who does not have a good comprehension of general problems and aims of education, is not effective in his own department.

The method of carrying on faculty meetings for the consideration of fundamental principles may be varied. Sometimes a teacher may be assigned to read a chapter from a book on secondary education in preparation for a study of the principle involved. Often the principal himself may review the leading considerations applying to the topic which is to be discussed. Teachers may be asked before the meeting to present concrete examples and illustrations of the topic in hand taken from the daily work of their departments. Very often the discussions may be held more to the point and be more sug-

gestive if a brief outline of the proposed topic is placed in the hands of the teachers before the meeting in which it is to be considered. A series of preliminary interviews with teachers who are to contribute to a topic gives definiteness to a discussion. After the meeting has been held, a mimeographed summary of it in the hands of all concerned is valuable in giving permanence and continuity to the work and in providing means of reference.

In a discussion of the matter of fundamental principles in secondary education definite provision should be made for the consideration of new movements in education as a separate enterprise. Constant changes are going on in the field of education. It is the business of the high-school faculty to keep in close touch with these movements. In the first place, because the new movements are often nothing more than a revaluation or a new view of old educational processes, the old aims and educational methods may be made more fertile by a study of these new movements. An example of this is the recent movement in the direction of vocational education. A high-school faculty, when studying this topic thoroughly, learns the reasons for the growth of the movement and its aims. It also learns in what respects the movement is vague and ill directed. After a teaching staff has studied the movement carefully, the old studies may be revalued to determine in what respects they comply with the objectives of the new movements. By this process it is also possible to discover in what way the teaching of the old subjects may be modified to meet the new objectives. Similarly the faculty can also become acquainted with changes which ought to be made in the curriculum. This is a valuable process even though the school is not able to adapt itself completely to the demands of the new movement.

In the second place, the high-school faculty should keep abreast of newer movements in education in order that the best features may be incorporated into the life of the school at an

appropriate time. If the faculty is thoroughly conversant with a new movement and the proper relations of the local school to it, whatever action is taken with reference to it will be intelligently understood by the entire school community, pupils and parents alike. The faculty can thus guard against certain dangers with regard to new movements. At this point it is clear that the school ought not to incorporate too many of the new movements at one time. A school organization can assimilate to advantage only a certain amount at one time. Furthermore, it is sometimes destructive to take new movements into the life of the school in their experimental stages. Such new movements can best be adopted only when the disturbing effects of their immature features have been carefully weighted and provided for and their advantages have been properly evaluated. Otherwise it is best to wait until the movement in question has attained maturity in order that it may be properly assimilated into the life of the school. Supervised study is an example of the hasty adoption of a new method of school administration. Scores of schools have undertaken this enterprise without having adequately studied it. The junior high school, although it has won merited success in many quarters, has failed in others because it was not adequately understood before it was adopted as a part of the local educational policy. The high-school faculty should make a constant study of these new movements with the requirements of the local school in mind. In this way the school may be thoroughly abreast of the times and yet do nothing that would radically interfere with the proper development of the local system.

The continuous study of proposed changes in the conduct and organization of the local school as a division of cooperative study on the part of the faculty, while closely related to the preceding subject, should not be confused with it. Any forward-looking educational movement should be a matter of

study on the part of the faculty for reasons stated above. If, however, the policy of the school itself is to be changed in the near future in any important particular, then the movement should have an intensive and detailed study not otherwise imperative. The principal should make a thorough study of the matter in its larger aspects. If the proposal be one of outstanding importance, it should be discussed with the board of education and perhaps with influential members of the local population. The teachers immediately concerned in it should make the most detailed study of all. Of the new movements the faculty as a whole should make a study, extensive and intensive. If this is done in an adequate manner the new department or the new policy will at once become a corporate part of the organization and should be a success from the beginning. For example, if a system of excess credits is to be introduced with the opening of a new school year, the faculty should be studying the matter thoroughly in a series of meetings in the preceding year. The principal will fully inform himself and explain to the faculty the effect of such a policy upon the requirements for graduation, and the possible effects of such a course of action in stimulating more intensive study among better students. He will discuss the advisability of fractional credits for the partial performance of the required amount of work for passing. He will consider and explain the possible effect of granting partial and excess credits upon pupils attempting to enter college. The teachers will need to examine anew the distribution of grades in their various classes, and to consider whether or not too large a portion will be receiving credit for work done. Any other new movement in education might be treated in the same way.

As indicated above, a systematic plan should be outlined for taking care of the routine of the school, for consideration of fundamental principles, the study of new movements in general, and new movements as applied to the local school. This

systematic plan should not be followed so rigidly, however, as to exclude the consideration of miscellaneous topics which various occasions may provide. For example, certain topics may have been discussed in a recent teachers' convention. The plan on which faculty meetings are conducted should provide an opportunity for the review of such discussions while the subject-matter is fresh in mind, no matter what part of the scheme for conducting the faculty meeting may be current. A significant article may appear in one of the educational magazines which may demand the attention of the faculty. An important experiment may have been recently conducted, to which the faculty should give attention. Possibly a significant device or method has been adopted by one of the school departments, with which the whole school should be made familiar. Perhaps some member of the faculty, having had opportunity to visit other schools, has secured valuable suggestions which it may be advisable to present in the faculty meeting. Incidental opportunities of this sort should be taken full advantage of. Although the topics which they treat may belong at some other point in the year's work of the faculty, they should be given to the faculty at once in order that full advantage of their recency may be taken.

The obvious effect of this plan is to keep the faculty, teachers and principal alike, alert in the whole field of education. The fact that it is a stimulus to the teachers is shown by the comments given below taken from a series of statements made by teachers in Thornton Township High School when asked rather abruptly one day to write for five or ten minutes suggestions as to the topics they considered most valuable for consideration in future faculty meetings:

"Topics along advanced educational lines have always been very helpful to me, and I should like to have them continued."

"Continue the discussion of the education of the masses to prevent social unrest."

"One meeting for discussion of extension activities of the high school. How best to reach the people of the community outside of school hours."

"Some possibility of grading pupils so that in teaching a class one will not weary some and talk over the heads of others. The time element for classes at present seems to make this impossible. I should like to have worked out a scheme for pupils according to various grades of intelligence. The supervised-study method would work far more effectively under these conditions."

"I should like to hear a further discussion by the different departments of what they are doing. I think we can often control our work to better advantage if we know what others are doing."

"I am interested in the discussion of such topics as have been considered lately; e.g., initiative and problem-solving. I should be glad to have the discussion of these and related topics continued."

"I like especially well the reports of state and national conventions—when these occur."

"So far as my department is concerned, I should like to have the subject of physical education considered in its proper relation to the other subjects in the curriculum. It seems to me it should be regarded as coordinate with the rest in respect to credit, time allotted, and so forth."

"Would the 6-6 plan or the 6-3-3 plan, such as is becoming so popular in Iowa, be applicable to a community of this kind?"

"Discussion of supervised study period."

"I would like to know what topics other departments would like the mathematics department to emphasize in its teaching. I might find this out by personal conference."

"When classes such as Miss . . . and mine are divided, just what credit should be given the work of the poor class so as to avoid A and B students feeling that it is much less difficult to get credit in such a class? That is, not to favor poor work. Or what should be the standard of credit for the poor class? I think it should be the same in all the school, but just what should it be?"

"In the interest of the correlation of the Latin department with others in the school, I should like to hear in particular from the English, history, and science departments *definite* and *concrete* suggestions of ways in which the Latin department may correlate with those to the further benefit (and interest) of the pupils."

"Right now, the appreciation which the *majority* of people have for better forms of entertainment, particularly the drama—or more particularly

the theater—the movies, etc., is at a very low ebb. The growth of that appreciation must be emphasized much more strongly in all social functions in the school—as well as bringing more of this broader appreciation into the various departments.”

“The first thing that occurs to me is that it would be of interest and profit for representatives of different departments to tell *specifically what* they do. I do not mean to discuss this technically or psychologically or theoretically, but practically as the work is carried on *here*. I believe we live within our *own* subject and its limitations too much; this would surely broaden us. We all know vaguely what each department does, but not many know specifically. This is my opinion only.”

“My suggestions are all comments. Teachers’ meetings have been very beneficial. I like for you to keep us informed on up-to-date problems in education and new literature on these problems. General criticism of the teachers and ways of co-operation are in order. I like your method of outlining the meeting so that they are definite and for a clear purpose. I think teachers should not be permitted to ‘ramble’ in teachers’ meeting without previous preparation.”

“Mr. . . . , I have wanted to say this for some time; you know that men and women *never* grow up, and the compulsory phase is as distasteful to them as to the child. In this relationship you are the teacher and we the students, as it were. The same attitude prevails, I believe the same things are *said* of the ‘class hour.’ There are *many* things of interest and importance to be said and discussed in these meetings. Why not hold the meetings necessary to the proper conducting of the school, and then *after* the time consumed for such business, or else at entirely different sessions, announce that any who do not care to stay may *freely* go.”

It is apparent from the foregoing comments that the teachers are interested in a wide variety of educational topics. It is also apparent that they receive benefit from a cooperative study of educational topics. It is also apparent that these subjects can all be formulated into a systematic scheme as outlined in the first part of this paper. Undoubtedly there are some teachers who would be too indolent to secure much benefit even from the most stimulating faculty study; but, since the whole project is designed for the maintenance and increase of efficiency of the faculty while in service, attendance and par-

ticipation in such a project should be insisted upon. It is, of course, apparent that such a project will not succeed unless carefully planned and efficiently executed.

A word should also be said as to the necessary qualifications of the principal who is to carry on such a project. He must give up ideas of maintaining himself in his position by becoming a member of numerous community organizations and by participating in many sorts of community enterprise. Of course his position demands that he shall make adequate provision for a proper community life. He must, however, be primarily devoted to educational aims and must practically allow all his energy to be absorbed in the scientific study of educational problems. His vision must be fixed upon forward-looking school enterprises. Otherwise he cannot provide the proper background for such a program as is proposed above.

The final phase in the consideration of the subject of this paper is a summary of the defects now existing in the typical high-school faculty, which it is the purpose of the plan here described to correct or at least to ameliorate.

A consideration of these defects and the proposed remedy for them, as well as any pertinent discussion of the function of the high-school faculty, must revert to the fundamental design of secondary education. Secondary education is primarily designed to initiate young people into a competent understanding of the civilization in which they have been reared as children and to prepare them for intelligent participation in it as adults. In recent years this general aim has been analyzed with increasing definiteness into a series of distinct and yet interlocking objectives; namely, health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character.

The American public-school faculty is poorly organized to attain the aims of secondary education mentioned above, either in its general or in its more specialized aspects. This is due to

the fact that the great variety of personalities and functions involved are not properly integrated. In the first place, departmental specialization tends to immerse the attention of the teachers in the complexities of subject-matter to the neglect of essential goals. The reorganization of the faculty on the basis of the cardinal principles¹ of education, rather than on the basis of departmental specialties as at present, would undoubtedly be an improvement, but it would still leave the teacher with an inordinate degree of departmental bias. A second important factor in preventing a full realization of the aims of secondary education is the fact that contributions which the various departments actually make toward these aims are not concretely analyzed and hence are not recognized nor fully developed for the benefit of the other departments. Each department could make its own contribution with more intelligence and greater efficiency if it were fully cognizant of the contributions being made or to be made by other departments. A third factor in preventing high-school teachers from maintaining an interest in general school policy is the fact that the high-school faculty does not participate in local school legislation and, consequently, does not secure the benefit of the larger outlook which such participation affords. The legislative functions reside entirely in the board of education. These legislative functions are affected by many social influences in the community and by the recommendations of the executive department of the high school. The executive department gets this training, but the teaching departments do not. The three difficulties just mentioned which stand in the way of educational unity culminate in a fourth. The teaching departments do not study intensively matters of general educational policy as a fundamental duty. On the other hand, the executive

¹ *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, p. 27. Bulletin 1918, No. 35, Bureau of Education.

department of the high school is held responsible for an educational policy which in its larger aspects must be approved by the board of education and in its minor aspects receive its tacit consent.

However complete the educational policy of a school, it becomes effective in the life of the pupils only through the instrumentality of the teaching departments. It is at this point that the greatest difficulty arises because of the wide gap existing between the executive and teaching departments. Both principals and teachers often fail to recognize the importance of attempting to bridge this gap.

These separatist tendencies must be eliminated so far as possible; unity of aims must be established; a coordination of activities brought about and a constant stimulus and occasion for professional improvement provided for the teaching body. Experience shows that this can be accomplished in large measure by a cooperative study of secondary-school problems in the high-school faculty meeting by means of the plan outlined above. Instruction becomes far more effective if teachers can make significant contributions to general school policy and thereby become keen thinkers in the field of educational aims. School policy itself becomes more nearly adequate if the executive department makes complete use of the resources of the teaching departments.